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## MEDIA RELEASE

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### ***Rio Hondo College Pathway to Law School Program Wins Diversity Champion Award***

**WHITTIER** – Rio Hondo College has received the third annual Diversity Champion Award from California LAW for excellence in building its Pathway to Law School program, which guides students in pursuing dreams of becoming lawyers and judges.

The award, announced this week, will be awarded Feb. 24, 2018 at the annual Pathway to Law Summit at the University of San Francisco.

California LAW – the acronym stands for leadership, access and workforce – serves as statewide coordinator and chief navigator of the Pathway to Law School program launched in 2015 to aid underrepresented, first-generation students interested in pursuing legal careers. The program includes 28 community colleges and six California law schools.

“Thank you so much for your commitment to the Pathway to Law School program through innovative and creative ways of keeping Rio Hondo Pathway students engaged and inspired to achieve success in the law,” California LAW Executive Director Leslie J. Cunningham wrote in her announcement.

“Your accomplishment of graduating 24 certified law pathway scholars in spring 2017 made the Rio Hondo pathway program a true frontrunner for the Diversity Award,” Cunningham wrote.

The nonprofit group is committed to creating a pipeline of diverse students from high schools, community colleges, four-year institutions and law schools into law and law-related fields so the profession reflects the state’s diversity.

“This award is truly an honor,” Superintendent/President Teresa Dreyfuss said. “We are committed to helping create a pathway to legal careers for our students, and this award recognizes the excellent strides being made in that effort.”

**MORE**

*Rio Hondo College, located in Whittier, California, is committed to the success of its diverse students and communities by providing dynamic educational opportunities and resources that lead to degrees, certificates, transfer, career and technical pathways, basic skills proficiency, and lifelong learning. For information on the College or its programs, please call 562-692-0921 or visit [www.riohondo.edu](http://www.riohondo.edu).*

Rio Hondo College's Pathway to Law School program includes seven classes, activities and internships to expand students' understanding of the skills and education they will need for law school. This year, Rio Hondo College added mentorships with local advocates to its list of activities, which includes a mock trial team and the Pre-Law Society.

"This program really helps students by exposing them to different activities and experiences other campuses can't provide," said Ryan Serrano, a second-year Pathway participant. "I'm glad Pathway is receiving recognition for preparing tomorrow's attorneys and politicians."

Serrano, who is captain of the mock trial team and president of the Pre-Law Society, said his goal is to enter the political arena – inspired by his work canvassing for Bernie Sanders in the 2016 presidential election.

"It was a life-changing experience," Serrano said.

For now, he's preparing for a mock trial competition in February and revitalizing the Pre-Law Society with a program of speakers that include local lawyers and state political leaders.

Board of Trustees President Norma Edith Garcia said the Pathway to Law School is representative of the many innovative and effective programs that characterize Rio Hondo College.

"Our mission is to provide the best possible avenues to college and career success to our community," Garcia said. "Our Pathway to Law School program exemplifies that promise. Congratulations to our program leaders, community supporters, advisers and mentors and, most of all, to our students."

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